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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventy-first year

Identical letters dated 2 September 2016 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

It is with grave concern that I write to draw your attention to the current situation in the Occupied State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, where the Palestinian people are suffering deeply from Israel's nearly 50-year illegal foreign occupation. With each passing day, Israel, the occupying Power, accelerates its illegal settlement campaign and strategic and systematic home demolitions, further confirming its true intentions to maintain its occupation of Palestine and to construct and expand illegal settlements and annex Palestinian land in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. This colonization campaign is in clear breach of international law and in absolute defiance of the international community's strong condemnations. They are also in complete contradiction of the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders and are further dimming the prospects for peace.

It is in this vein that I am compelled to highlight recent Israeli Government settlement announcements and demolitions of Palestinian homes and properties, which continue to be seized forcibly, displacing Palestinian families, including children. All of this is being done in grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention, as well as of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. These decisions taken at the highest level, convened at the insistence of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Army Minister Avigdor Lieberman, are evidence of the true intentions of the occupying Power and are undermining the two-State solution.

Just this week, the occupying Power announced the approval of more illegal settlements in the Occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, further proving its illegal expansionist agenda. On 31 August 2016, the occupying Power approved more than 460 new settlement units. A total of 285 new settlement units approved have been slated for construction, including 234 units in the so-called settlement of "Elkana", south of Nablus; 31 units in the so-called settlement of "Beit Arye"; and

20 units in the so-called settlement of "Giv'at Ze'ev", in occupied East Jerusalem. The occupying Power took their belligerent settlement campaign further by retroactively "legalizing" 179 settlement units constructed in "Beit Arye" in the 1980s. Here, we echo the statement by Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, at the 29 August briefing to the Security Council, "Let me be clear: no legal acrobatics can change the fact that all outposts — whether 'legalized' under Israeli law or not, whether located on State land, absentee land or private land — just like all settlements in Area C and East Jerusalem, remain illegal under international law." Furthermore, it was reported that the occupying Power intends to approve more illegal settlement units in the near future, including 30 units in the so-called settlement of "Efrat".

All the while, and in direct correlation with this illegal settlement campaign, Israel, the occupying Power, has continued unabated in its malicious destruction of Palestinian homes, also in grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and in defiance of the international calls to halt such actions. One of the most glaring recent examples occurred on 29 August, when Israeli occupying forces demolished and forced Palestinian residents to self-demolish a total of 11 structures, rendering 28 people homeless, including 18 children in the Bedouin community of Maazi Jaba in occupied East Jerusalem. It is important to note that over 70 per cent of Palestinian Bedouins in the occupied West Bank are refugees. On 30 August, Israeli occupying forces demolished three homes in occupied East Jerusalem in the neighbourhood of Sur Bahir, rendering five Palestinians homeless. Also on 30 August, Israeli occupying forces punitively demolished the family home of Mohammed Abd Al-Majid Amayreh, in the town of Dura, south of Al-Khalil, rendering his family homeless. We condemn all acts of collective punishment by the occupying Power, which are in blatant violation of international law.

Moreover, Israeli settlers continue with their acts of violence and terror against Palestinian civilians and their properties. Extremists continue to raid Palestinian villages, harassing, intimidating and attacking civilians, including, in particular, children and herders, and also continue their incursions into Haram al-Sharif, in Occupied East Jerusalem. In the recent period, 65 Israeli settlers escorted by "Israeli intelligence officers" stormed the Al-Aqsa mosque compound, in occupied East Jerusalem, further stoking tensions.

While there is international consensus on the illegality of the settlement regime in its various manifestations and on the grave threat posed to peace by illegal Israeli policies and practices in this regard, nothing has been done to put an end to them. This has encouraged Israel, the occupying Power, to pursue and intensify its illegal actions. We call on the international community to take a firm and principled stand against all illegal Israeli actions against the Palestinian people and their land. Israel, the occupying Power, must unequivocally halt all settlement activities in all areas of Occupied Palestine, including in and around Occupied East Jerusalem. The Security Council in particular has a clear role to play in this regard and must act to uphold and implement its own resolutions. The international community must act responsibly and take serious and bold action aimed at compelling Israel to immediately cease its crimes and violations once and for all, before it is too late, and end the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 so that the Palestinian people can finally live in freedom and dignity in their own independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

This letter is in follow-up to our 593 previous letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 23 August 2016 (A/ES-10/729-S/2016/735) constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine
to the United Nations